



Florida House of Representatives

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 17, 2009

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VAN ZANT BILL TO PROTECT FLORIDIANS FROM LIBEL TOURISM PASSES HOUSE

~Bill Shields Floridians from Libel Suits Filed by Terrorists, Other Foreigners~

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Representative Charles E. Van Zant (R-Keystone Heights) lauded the unanimous passage of House Bill (HB) 949 by the Florida House of Representatives. The measure relates to grounds for non-recognition of foreign defamation judgments. This legislation closely resembles a similar law that was passed nearly a year ago by the New York Legislature.

HB 949, like the law passed in New York, will help in the fight against a tactic known as "Libel Tourism" which results from defamation lawsuits filed against authors critical of individuals with known ties to terrorist organizations like al Qaeda and Hamas. The lawsuits have been finding their way into foreign courts. HB 949 will provide Florida courts with the ability not to recognize a foreign judgment, if that country's laws protecting free speech and the free press are not at least as protective as freedoms provided in the constitutions of Florida and United States.

"This bill protects all Floridians' fundamental right to the freedom of speech and press without fear of reprisal from foreign courts," said Representative Van Zant, the bill's sponsor. "Political speech is a right we as Americans and Floridians hold dear. This law will ensure that no Floridian will ever have to answer to terrorists as a result of their criticism of terrorism, or its enablers."

(more)

House Majority Leader, Adam Hasner (R-Boca Raton) added, “This bill protects Floridians from having their right to free speech suppressed by those with radical ideologies. Foreign courts that do not place the same value on our constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech will no longer be used to intimidate Florida citizens.”

The bill’s companion, Senate Bill 1066, will be considered in the Senate Rules Committee before heading to the Senate floor for final passage.

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